

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE LEGACY OF MAHAN FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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## ABSTRACT

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Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity characterize the environment of the 21st Century and thus a strategy for the U.S. can be a difficult to develop and implement. The two main challenges the U.S. faces today are China and the Global War on Terrorism. At the end of the day, the U.S. is a maritime nation and a study of history shows the British Empire faced a similar situation of global interests in a dynamic environment much as the U.S. faces today. Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan based his seminal treatise, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*, on the maritime power coupled with the diplomatic skill that the British wielded so effectively to build their vast empire. Thomas Barnett deftly divides the world into the Functioning Core and the Non-Integrating Gap. SEA POWER 21 is a direct descendent of Mahan's Sea Power theory and the Sea Base pillar of SEA POWER 21 is the key element to engage the Gap. Using Barnett's Core/Gap analysis to describe the current global environment combined with a study of Mahan Sea Power strategy can lead to a development of a roadmap to shrink the Gap and achieve the goals of the National Security Strategy.

## THE LEGACY OF MAHAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA) characterize the environment of the 21st century and thus a strategy for the U.S. can be a difficult concept to develop and implement. During the academic year at the Army War College we have had the opportunity to survey several strategists from Pericles in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. through Clausewitz, Jomini, and Mahan up to our modern day with COL John Warden, USAF. Using history as a model, we find that the British Empire faced a situation similar to our current environment at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They had a far-flung empire with global economic ties that relied heavily on seaborne commerce. They had a large standing navy with a smaller but highly professional army. They had a diplomatic corps that was proficient at rapidly building and developing coalitions that when combined with the military was very capable of meeting the diverse challenges that faced them at the time. The United States faces a similar environment today with the rise of China as a global power and the struggle with the Global War on Terror. Thomas Barnett deftly divides today's world into the Functioning Core or just Core [Those parts of the world that are actively integrating their national economies into a global economy and that adhere to globalization's emerging security rule set<sup>1</sup>] and the Non-Integrating Gap or just Gap [Regions of the world that are largely disconnected from the global economy and the rule sets that define its stability<sup>2</sup>]. Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan based his seminal treatise, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783*, on the maritime power coupled with the diplomatic skill that the British wielded so effectively to build their vast empire. While it is difficult to develop an in-depth understanding of a strategist in such a short timeframe, I believe that Thomas Barnett's Core/Gap analysis is useful to describe the current global environment. Then we can use Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's Sea Power strategy, whose legacy is the current Naval Strategy SEA POWER 21 with the Sea Base pillar as the main enabler, as a roadmap to achieve the goals of the National Security Strategy.

### U.S. Strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

"The United States relationship with China is an important part of our strategy to promote a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia-Pacific region. We welcome the emergence of a strong, peaceful and prosperous China"<sup>3</sup> according to the National Security Strategy. China is clearly an arriving, economic force and thus a national power on the world scene. China will determine the influence that the U.S. will have not only in the Pacific Rim region as well as in the world. As Thomas Barnett points out in the Pentagon's New Map, China is a country that he identifies as a "New/integrating member of the Core I worry may be lost in the coming year."<sup>4</sup>

Thus our engagement with China is at a crucial point. A key component of the U.S.'s engagement with China will be the Sea Base component of the Navy's SEA POWER 21 Strategy. It will give the U.S. a means to maintain presence and influence in the area despite any ongoing diplomatic situations. It will assure free lines of communication/commerce for all nations and it will enable the U.S. to respond to a variety of threats across the entire spectrum of conflict in the region. Seabasing will enable the U.S. to engage the Chinese in their backyard and in multiple other locales across the globe. Seabasing is a key element for enabling the achievement of the National Security Strategy.

#### Current and Future Environment

The challenges as well as the opportunities facing the U.S. today and in the near future is that of globalization. First, our only near-peer competitor is China. How the U.S. decides to engage China will determine if China will be an opportunity or a challenge. Second, we are currently engaged in a Global War on Terror. I contend that the root of the "terror" problem is the disenfranchisement that globalization fosters in some parts of the world. As Tom Friedman points out "anger also has to do with the frustration of Arabs and Muslims at having to live, in many, many cases, under authoritarian governments, which not only deprive their people of a voice in their own future, but have deprived tens of millions of young people in particular of opportunities to achieve their full potential through good jobs and modern schools. The fact that the flat world enables people to so easily compare their circumstances with others only sharpens their frustrations."<sup>6</sup> A solution that enables the U.S. to compete and work with the Chinese while at the same time brings the benefits of globalization to as many people peacefully as possible is necessary.

#### Near-Peer Competitor

A stable, peaceful, prosperous China in the Asia-Pacific region is essential to the health and well-being of the United States and global economy. China's rapid economic growth, coupled with its massive population, has given it an insatiable thirst for resources and markets to sell its goods. This newfound power of China has enabled it to flex its muscles in ways that challenge the U.S. asymmetrically. The ability to promote a stable, peaceful and prosperous China and region will be a delicate endeavor requiring as much "carrot" as "stick". Some of the "carrots" we can offer to China are a hungry consumer market, a robust and stable dollar, and a military organized to keep peace in the region and the lines of commerce open and flowing. Some of the "sticks" we can offer China are a military second to none, trade sanctions, and the ability to explore and develop other markets.

China is a nation that clearly has her neighbors and other countries worried about its rapid economic growth and huge spending on defense. “Japan warned Thursday [22 December 2005] that China's expanding military budget represents a growing danger and is arousing suspicion among other nations”.<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to fathom China's intentions since there is no credible military threat to its existence. Thus, the question that has to be answered is, “Why the large defense expenditure?” China is a nuclear power with a defense budget that has been growing for over a decade so all nations with interests in the Pacific region have to be studying this problem carefully.

China's “rapid economic growth, its huge population, its demand for resources and its energetic diplomacy are posing delicate questions for politicians around the globe.”<sup>7</sup> China has shed its colonialist past and clearly wants to be a player on the world stage as shown by the fact that “China is now the fastest-growing investor in Africa. Its indifference to human rights has given its companies an edge in places as disparate as Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, Sudan and Iran.”<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, China is choosing to pursue its initiatives in the “gap” that Barnett describes (see map below) in the Pentagon's New Map.



FIGURE 1 - BARNETT'S PENTAGON'S NEW MAP<sup>9</sup>

Barnett defines the Gap as “where globalization is thinning or just plain absent, and I will show you regions plagued by politically repressive regimes, widespread poverty and disease, routine mass murder, and—most important—the chronic conflicts that incubate the next generation of global terrorists.”<sup>10</sup> The Gap is an area that is crucial to many of the objectives defined in the National Security Strategy (a strong world economy), the National Defense Strategy (secure strategic access and retain global freedom of action) and the National Military

Strategy (conducting operations in the “arc of instability” that is a breeding ground for threats to our interests)<sup>11</sup>. The stability and peace that the U.S. desires to promote is best achieved by promoting the transition of countries from the Gap to the Core. Barnett defines the Core as “show me where globalization is thick with network connectivity, financial transactions, liberal media flows, and collective security, and I will show you regions featuring stable governments, rising standards of living, and more deaths by suicide than murder. These parts of the world I call the Functioning Core, or Core.”<sup>12</sup>

“Not only has China experienced a rapid growth economically it is also rapidly modernizing its military. China has deployed over 600 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM) across from Taiwan and is adding to the arsenal at a rate of 100 per year.”<sup>13</sup> Although Taiwan clearly has China’s attention in the near term, the SRBMs are very mobile and a quick glance at Barnett’s map shows that many of the Gap countries are within range of Chinese territory. The continued growth of “China’s air and naval force improvements would also allow it to engage beyond the Taiwan area. Airborne early-warning and control and aerial refueling programs will allow extended operations into the South China Sea.”<sup>14</sup> The Chinese are clearly making the most efficient use of their environmental scanning and learning lessons from our operations in the region and globally. The rapid growth in the Chinese military coupled with the offensive power of SRBMs means that China will be able to extend its influence well beyond Taiwan to include Southeast Asia, Korea, Japan, the Sea Lines of Communication and many Gap countries.

China is aggressively searching and securing long-term contracts for external sources of resources and energy to support their growing economy and markets to sell their products. “China regards stability and reliable access to energy as vital to its rapid economic growth.”<sup>15</sup> A natural place for the Chinese to look to gain these resources is the Gap. The question becomes, “with the U.S.’s scarce and over-deployed resources what is the best way to promote the movement [gap to core] of these countries in support of the National Military Strategy, National Defense Strategy and National Security Strategy?”

#### Global War on Terrorism

“The struggle against international terrorism is different from any other war in our history. We will not triumph solely or even primarily through military might. We must fight terrorist networks, and all those who support their efforts to spread fear around the world, using every instrument of national power – diplomatic, economic, law enforcement, financial, information, intelligence, and military. Progress will come through the persistent accumulation of

successes.”<sup>16</sup> The fight against terrorism will require a long-term commitment utilizing all elements of national power in many areas of the world that will either deny U.S. presence or at most allow the presence with as small a footprint as possible. It is difficult for the U.S. military to define a strategy to deal with terrorism because it is not an easily defined threat (e.g., as is China’s rising power) and it is not limited to a specific locality. Thus, the best way to fight terrorism is to fight the underlying issues that create terrorists and the tools for this fight are all the elements of national power, not just the military element.

The U.S. strategy for Combating Terrorism has four goals; Defeat terrorists and their organizations, deny sponsorship, support and sanctuary to terrorist, diminish underlying conditions that terrorists seek to exploit and defend U.S. citizens at home and abroad.<sup>17</sup> To accomplish these four goals the U.S. will need a strategy that is flexible, adaptive and responsive.

America’s Global War on Terror has interesting implications for the Gap. A quick study of threats to the U.S. leads to the conclusion that “the biggest direct threats we now face are from non-state actors waging war with no rules against a global system to which we are strongly connected and with which we are intimately identified. Where do those non-state actors find sanctuary? Primarily in failed state located inside the Gap, which means those states are indirectly a source of threat to the United States.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Gap becomes a place where the U.S. military will find itself spending a great deal of time and effort usually with minimal supporting infrastructure. “Strike” missions are not an applicable strategy for fighting terrorists. Terrorists rarely take on their enemy force-on-force (i.e., where a strike mission would be most suitable) instead choosing to avoid open conflict with their enemy. A successful counter-terrorism strategy will be one that requires lengthy U.S. presence doing things other than “strike” such as humanitarian or stability operations. “We must deter and dissuade potential adversaries in peacetime through persistent forward presence, and respond instantaneously in war by amassing overwhelming and lethal combat power. As we learned in Indonesia, and as we are seeing in the international relief efforts in earthquake-stricken Pakistan today, virtual presence is not the answer. You need to be there to make a difference.”<sup>19</sup> The U.S. Navy’s Sea Base concept will give joint and coalition forces the opportunity to operate from a secure environment that will be flexible and mobile to meet mission needs and requirements.

#### Mahan’s Theory of Sea power

To understand Mahan’s Sea Power strategy you have to understand the importance that the sea played during his era (the 1860s to the 1900s). The natural resources provided by the



sea (at Mahan's time it was mainly fishing but now there is mineral wealth in addition) were fundamentally necessary for a strong, rich nation. The transportation and trade made possible by the sea was available to all countries with a coastline. Those countries that had large coastlines with deep natural harbors situated near well-traveled lines of commerce had a distinct advantage. The information and trade that flowed through these lines of commerce was essential to the growth and wealth of any nation.

The ability to link trade, sea power and diplomacy was utilized efficiently by Great Britain at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to solve many of the same problems that the U.S. faces today. "Britain, which coupled a flair for coalition warfare with a sustained strategy of maritime dominance, refined a policy that combined aggressive economic policies, maritime dominance, and fighting continental opponents by proxy within coalitions. Coalition forces are using these same methods in Afghanistan and, to a lesser degree, in Iraq. The British used this method to build a force structure around a large, vigorous Navy and a small (by Continental standards), but highly professional, expeditionary army."<sup>20</sup> If the last 15 years are any indication, it is difficult to imagine the U.S. going to war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century without some form of coalition and thus history, as Mahan pointed out, can serve as an excellent guidebook.

To Mahan, command of the sea meant the elimination of the adversary's capability to interfere in U.S. interests. Mahan felt that an offensive navy used in concentration was the goal of a great sea power nation. At the core of Mahan's beliefs was economic strangulation of the enemy from the sea.<sup>21</sup> To do this a country must be a naval power that comprised the trinity of geography (location to the world's sea-lanes), bases (necessary for power projection and sustainability) and the fleet (a powerful fleet manned with trained crews that would be concentrated in an offensive action to engage the enemy's fleet). When a nation was a naval power, they could then concentrate on becoming a sea power.

Mahan identified six critical elements that made a nation a sea power. The first element was geographic position and by this he meant a nation, with a geographic position that leant itself to sea power, did not have to worry about defending itself by land. England was his model for this since they were an island nation and thus they did not have to worry about defending any large land borders such as those that concerned France and Germany. The U.S. has two major land borders but in the last two centuries, these borders have not been a major burden on troop resources. The Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean along with the non-threatening northern and southern borders tend to let the U.S. think and act as an island nation.

Mahan's second element was physical conformation by which he meant the seaboard. "The seaboard of a country is one of its frontiers; and the easier the access offered by the

frontier to the region beyond, in this case the sea, the greater will be the tendency of a people toward intercourse with the rest of the world by it.”<sup>22</sup> According to a Joint Hearing on Port and Maritime Transportation Congestion by the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation and the House Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment in May 2001 95% of U.S. foreign trade tonnage is by sea. Obviously, Mahan’s second element is crucial to the economical health and stability of the U.S. still to this day.

Mahan’s third element was the extent of territory that comprised a country. “As regards the development of sea power, it is not the total number of square miles which a country contains, but the length of the coast-line and the character of its harbors that are to be considered”.<sup>23</sup> The larger the coastline situated with natural harbors the better off the country would be to have a strong commerce and the capability to support fleet actions. It is harder for an enemy to blockade such a country and the internal and external lines of communication will be subject to less “friction”. A modern example of this is the devastation wrought on the port of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina. As devastating as this catastrophe is, it will not have a long-term impact on U.S. trade due to the abundance of coastline and other natural harbors for commerce to flow into the country.

Mahan’s fourth element was the number of population, specifically the number of population involved in the sea for their living (e.g., sailors and fisherman). This is extremely important because these skills are not easily replaced. It takes years for a sailor and fisherman to learn and hone their skills and the loss of a significant number, especially in a small nation, can have a very detrimental effect. If a nation has a small standing professional force for the nucleus of the army, they can rapidly build up a credible and sizeable force. A nation cannot quickly build up an effective Navy. The development and building of ships takes years and having a crew that can maintain and fight the ship requires a great deal of training.

Mahan’s fifth element was the national character of a nation, which referred to the attitude that a nation had toward commerce. Nations that understood the value of commerce and had an open attitude toward it tended to prosper and grow.

Mahan’s sixth, and final, element of sea power was the character of government. By this he meant did the government pay attention to the sea service with respect to commerce (which directly led to national wealth) and to a strong, capable navy (which directly led to the security of that national wealth).

## SEA POWER 21

SEA POWER 21 defines U.S. Naval Strategy in the 21st Century. It consists of three main pieces, Sea Shield, Sea Strike, Sea Base, three supporting pieces Sea Trial, Sea Warrior, Sea Enterprise and it is joined together and enabled by FORCEnet. Sea Power 21 will give the U.S. the capability to control the seas, guarantee access from the sea, project power, influence events, advance U.S. interests and protect the homeland.

The U.S. Navy Chief of Naval Operations at the time, Vern Clark, stated in his SEAPOWER 21 presentation to the Naval War College in 2002, "Sea Shield is about projecting defensive power from the sea. Keys include protecting our nation at home, assuring allies overseas and dissuading and deterring potential adversaries in multiple theaters." Sea Shield will provide defense across the joint battle space. A clear link can be made between Mahan's "Command of the Sea" and Sea Shield.

"Sea Strike is about projecting dominant and decisive offensive power against key enemy targets using a wide array of means, whatever means is required. The focus here is not on means; the focus is on what we have to be about in the 21st century. The ability to project dominant offensive power, lethal and non-lethal, including long-range aircraft and missiles, information operations, Special Forces, and Marines."<sup>24</sup> As stated earlier Mahan strongly believed in the offensive capability of a fleet being essential to make it a great naval power and thus making the nation it serves a great sea power. Sea Strike is the Nation's 21<sup>st</sup> Century answer to Mahan's offensive capability. While the U.S. Navy does bring a very mobile and flexible strike capability to a Joint Force all of the other services have a significant strike capability of their own that each service will argue is equally as powerful.

"Sea Basing is about projecting sovereignty around the world. I believe that this will be more important than ever in the 21st century. The independence of naval vessels operating on the high seas from the maritime domain allows us to conduct combat operations anywhere, anytime, and without requesting permission first. I like to put it in the jargon of asking the principal for a permission slip. This is a tremendous advantage and it allows the Joint Force Commander to seize the initiative and to drive timelines. And it uses the 70% of the earth's surface that is covered with water as a vast maneuver space to aid in the warfighting effort."<sup>25</sup> Mahan's dedication to the offensive and concentration of forces (a la Jomini) is evident in the seabasing strategy. This will enable the U.S. to defeat an adversary's anti-access strategies with a joint force that is multi-mission capable. The logistics and communications brought to bear will not only serve as a great deterrent to our opponents, but will also serve as a great enabler to our coalition partners. One of the key components of any coalition is to demonstrate

resolve. Seabasing, with the resources and capabilities that it will bring to bear, will be a testament to all allies and adversaries of the U.S. commitment to action.

Seabasing will give the U.S. a capability to join diverse naval platforms (i.e., platforms brought together from different strike groups for specific tasking), joint forces and coalition partners. The U.S. led response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami is an excellent example of this capability to build an ad hoc coalition operating diverse platforms supporting multiple elements from multiple sea bases. This coalition was put together rapidly with units joining and departing daily yet an uninterrupted flow of information was able to coordinate all of the logistical efforts to support the tsunami relief operations. The U.S. utilized the Abraham Lincoln Strike Group, and the Essex Expeditionary Strike Group as the core of the sea base that served to be the focal point for 21 nations participating in the relief efforts. The limiting factor to nations participating will be the compatibility and interoperability of their equipment with U.S. equipment. Though the sea bases were not operating in a hostile environment, it was certainly an environment comprised of volatility, uncertainty and complexity. Mahan would have recognized the offensive power that was concentrated to efficiently address the problems caused by the devastation of the tsunami and he would have understood the coalitions quickly formed to execute the relief efforts from his studies of Great Britain.

The truly unique characteristic of Seabasing, a characteristic that no other service provides, is that the Sea Base is a very small “footprint” (if any foot print at all). It can arrive and depart quickly (governments appreciate U.S. assistance but they do not desire the U.S. to stay for extended periods) and it can conduct operations across the entire spectrum of conflict while transitioning between operations rapidly.

The three components of SEA POWER 21 with its “Mahanian” heritage cannot be viewed merely as a naval strategy, but more importantly a national strategy. The very joint and coalition nature of the components provides the cornerstone of strategy that will allow the U.S., much like the British of Mahan’s study, not only a robust seaborne force, but facilitate a flexible diplomacy from which to build viable coalitions to meet any threats.

As the National Military Strategy states, the National Military Objectives are to protect the United States (by countering threats close to their source, protecting strategic approaches to the U.S, defensive actions at home and creating a global anti-terrorism environment), prevent conflict and surprise attack (by forward posture and presence) and prevail against all adversaries. Sea Power 21, which clearly traces its lineage back to Mahan, superbly supports the National Military Strategy. Sea Power 21 focuses on providing the capability to exploit the world’s largest maneuver space, creating a unified battle space and supporting joint operations

in the critical areas that gives the U.S. distinct advantages: effects-based targeting and a fully networked knowledge-centric environment.

“A maritime power has more options when required to engage in coalition operations, be it diplomacy or the various levels of warfare. Using international sea and air space as maneuver medium for the military instrument of power makes it easier to gain permission to effectively cooperate with, base troops in and transit other countries.”<sup>26</sup> A well thought out maritime strategy will lead to a robust national strategy that will give the U.S. the flexibility it needs to pursue its interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. SEA POWER 21, a direct descendant of Mahan’s sea power strategy, provides the solid foundation for the U.S. National Strategy that will enable the U.S. to continue to be a world power. SEA POWER 21 enables the U.S. with a potent joint offensive capability that when coupled with sound skillful diplomatic strategy will provide a concentrated coalition capable of operations across the entire spectrum of conflict. The U.S. in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is facing many of the same problems that Great Britain faced during the period of Mahan’s study. How Great Britain successfully dealt with those problems served as a model for Mahan’s *Influence of Seapower*, which in turn served as a strategy for the U.S. to become not only the dominant maritime power but also the dominant world power. The study of history from this perspective serves as an insightful lens to look to the future.

#### Sea Base

As Sun Tzu stated, “For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”<sup>27</sup> The results of the U.S. employment of its military might for humanitarian assistance missions has swung more “hearts and minds” to the U.S. favor in the Gap (e.g., Indonesia and Pakistan) than the military might displayed in Iraq. It is clear that the National Strategies, while assuring that the U.S. will be the pre-eminent military power, would prefer the U.S. to be the peaceful hegemon. A peaceful, democratic world where free trade predominates is the road preferred by the U.S. The U.S.’s economic and military powers are the keys to promoting the stability of the global environment that will enable all countries to prosper and grow. The route for the U.S. to exploit its powers is via engagement. SEA POWER 21, especially seabasing is what will enable the U.S. to demonstrate resolve, especially in the Gap (where China is investing many resources), to allies, partners and potential adversaries through engagement.

Rear Admiral Michael Lefever, Commander Expeditionary Strike Group One (ESG-1), is currently deployed and conducting operations across the entire spectrum of conflict from exercises with allies, to combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, to

humanitarian relief operations in Pakistan. When questioned about the viability of Seabasing his response was, "Expeditionary Strike Group One conducted seabasing operations with our allies in the Pacific Rim, combat operations in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, maritime support operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf protecting critical oil infrastructures at sea and on the Al Faw Peninsula, humanitarian relief operations to the Philippines and later to the earthquake ravaged victims of Pakistan. In short, the flexibility seabasing provides gives the U.S. the capability to react across the entire spectrum of conflict and across the land sea interface in unprecedented ways with a flexibility and adaptability that is crucial to U.S. international actions and influence operations in the future."<sup>28</sup> The U.S. is making ingenious use of the Sea Base to support humanitarian relief operations in Pakistan, but its allies are not fully reaping the benefits of the Sea Base due to incompatibility of equipment and doctrine. The only solution to more fully incorporate our allies into our strategy is to include the allies in Sea Base exercises and operations and insure that our Sea Base systems are an "open architecture" and encourage our allies to procure (buy or build) compatible equipment.

While examining Barnett's map (see figure 1) the vast majority of the Gap is accessible from the littorals. Given the mobility and range that will be added to the Sea Base with the arrival of High Speed Vessels, the V-22 Osprey, and other "connectors", coupled with joint support (i.e., Air Force airborne tankers) there will be very few areas of the Gap that are not accessible from a Sea Base. An opportunity to achieve the goals of the National Security Strategy while being fiscally prudent is the Sea Base concept of Sea Power 21. The inhabitants of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which is the location of many terrorist training camps, are quick to notice the humanitarian relief brought by the U.S. They are seeing the same kind of resolve that the survivors of the 2004 Tsunami saw coming from U.S. seabasing in the Indian Ocean. These good deeds go far further in delivering the "peace and prosperity" message than any cruise missile ever will. Many foreign navy ships participated in the Tsunami relief; however, if they had been more interoperable with the U.S. forces their contribution could have been a true "force multiplier". "The poll [poll conducted in Indonesia concerning U.S. relief operations for the 2005 Tsunami] found that, as a direct result of our humanitarian assistance – and for the first time ever in a Muslim nation – more people favored U.S. led efforts to fight terrorism...it was a stunning turnaround of public opinion and demonstrates that U.S. actions can make a significant and immediate difference in eroding the support base for global terrorists."<sup>29</sup> A Sea Base brings what every host country likes to see, a robust humanitarian assistance/disaster relief capability, a small footprint and a presence that will assuredly disappear as quickly as it appeared.

Another excellent example of how a Sea Base was put together quickly to deal with a rapidly evolving situation was the Navy's response to Hurricane Katrina in September 2005. "Coast Guard helicopters and boat crews led the way, while the capabilities of Navy amphibious vessels, air cushion landing craft, and Marine amtracs proved their worth along the battered coast – particularly in the flooded city of New Orleans, where the USS *Iwo Jima* (LHD-7) came alongside and President George Bush came aboard to spend the night. The hospital ship *Comfort* (T-AH 20) tied up in Pascagoula, Mississippi, where the new *San Antonio* (LPD-17) housed and fed shipyard workers."<sup>30</sup> A joint force of Coast Guardsman, Sailors and Marines comprised the members of this Sea Base that responded so well in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. While there were many accolades for what the joint force accomplished, there was also a great deal of criticism that more was not accomplished faster. One of the best ways to achieve faster and more efficient operations is to increase the capacity of our sea base, build proficiency through joint exercises and evolve our Sea Base tactics, training procedures and concept.

### Conclusions

The United States is a maritime nation and command of the sea equates to the elimination of an adversary's capability to interfere with U.S. interests. The primary U.S. challenges in the foreseeable future are China and the Global War on Terrorism. Incorporating China as a peaceful mainstay of what Thomas Barnett defines as the Core and shrinking the Gap as much as possible are two essential steps to achieving the goals of the National Security Strategy – promote democracy, preserve peace and promote economic growth. Alfred Thayer Mahan's study of British sea power was the stimulus for the growth of American sea power and created the roadmap for the U.S. Navy to become the dominant Navy of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The U.S. Navy's strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, SEA POWER 21, is a direct descendent of Mahan's theories of sea power. Sea Base is the pillar of SEA POWER 21 that will most enable the U.S. to constructively engage China and conduct operations in the Gap to foster a migration of Gap states to the functioning Core. A closer study of Mahan will lead to a viable roadmap for shrinking the Gap as much as possible and accomplishing the objectives of the National Security Strategy.

The National Security Strategy of promoting peace and prosperity throughout the world will definitely be challenged in the Gap. The surest route to peace and prosperity is to make the Gap as small as possible by transitioning Gap countries into the Core. China may try to exert their future political, economic and military might as an asymmetric challenge to the power of

the U.S., especially in the Gap. This potential challenge, coupled with the already inherent instability of the GAP, will provide unique challenges and opportunities for the U.S. The U.S. will need to engage the Gap, and for that matter Core countries on the seam of the Gap, politically, economically and militarily to foster the transition from Gap to Core. The Chinese will probably challenge on several levels (political, economic, diplomatic, etc...) U.S. engagement of Gap countries and thus these programs must be fully planned and exercised. The U.S. will need to be ready to conduct operations worldwide, often in an "anti-access environment", across the entire spectrum of conflict with rapid transitions between events. The U.S. will need a flexible response that is mobile and adaptive to each specific situation. The Sea Base pillar of SEA POWER 21 is a key element for achieving this capability. Therefore, Seabasing directly supports the National Security Strategy and needs to be fully embraced. The capabilities that a Sea Base brings to bear can only be further heightened by jointly exercising its capabilities with all of the services and our allies, by prioritizing funding for seabasing assets and by a thorough study of the concepts that have led to the development of the sea base.

#### Recommendations

As demonstrated above SEA POWER 21 and Seabasing in particular, directly supports the National Military Strategy, the National Defense Strategy and the National Security Strategy. It is important that the U.S. capitalize on this unique asset. Since the Sea Base is a modular concept (add and subtract units and capabilities as the mission demands) it fully supports and enables the Joint environment. To gain even more benefits from the Sea Base concept I suggest the following recommendations.

*Recommendation #1:* Increase the amount of Joint exercises that fully utilize the SEA POWER 21 concept. The more Joint Force commanders practice utilizing this concept, the more adaptable and powerful it will become. Once all forces become proficient using and operating from the Sea Base they will be able to fully understand and exploit its capabilities leveraging these capabilities to best support the functions that each service brings to the solution set. Sea Strike and Sea Shield directly supports the goals for combating terrorism and incorporating them into a joint environment can only make the U.S. responses more flexible and adaptive.

*Recommendation #2:* Increase ally participation/utilization of the Sea Base concept. As the National Defense Strategy points out "International partnerships continue to be a principal source of our strength."<sup>31</sup> If we are to fully utilize this principal source of our strength, we need to encourage our allies to fully embrace our Sea Base concept, encouraging them to operate



with us from the Sea Base assuring that their systems are fully interoperable with the U.S. systems that will be deployed on the Sea Base. This crosses from the realm of defense to international trade and cooperation. We will have to allow our allies access to the plans for our Sea Base systems and sell and/or co-develop with them the necessary technology that they cannot develop internally.

*Recommendation #3:* Transform the procurement system so that all systems that might potentially operate from a Sea Base are truly Joint and interoperable. These systems range from the obvious C4I systems to the not so obvious CH-47. The Sea Base is designed and built with the modular concept; consequently, connecting systems should be built with this modularity in mind to multiply the strength of the system (e.g., put folding rotor blades on a CH-47 to take up less deck space).

*Recommendation #4:* Study Mahan's elements of sea power in more detail at all service colleges to broaden understanding of how the British were able to integrate all elements of national power to deal with their volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment at the height of their empire. A through study of this area by War College students will provide a strong foundation of leaders for operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*Recommendation #5:* Elevate the priority of construction of Sea Base elements. Currently Sea Strike and Sea Shield programs (e.g., Joint Strike Fighter and DDX) are well funded yet strike and shield missions are something that all of the services bring to the spectrum of conflict. Sea Base is a Navy unique capability and as stated by the current CNO, Admiral Mullen, the humanitarian assistance operations that our sea base capabilities support are paying the biggest dividends in the War on Terror.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, *Blueprint for Action: A Future Worth Creating* (New York, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005) p. xvii – xviii.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D. C.: The White House, September 2002, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map", *Esquire* (March 2003) <http://www.thomaspmbarrett.com/published/pentagonsnewmap.htm> accessed 18 November 2005

<sup>5</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*, (New York, NY, Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 2005), p. 392.

<sup>6</sup> “Japan Calls China’s Military a Threat”, ABC News (December 22, 2005) <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=1432190> accessed 22 December 2005.

<sup>7</sup> “Meeting the Superpower”, *The Economist* (November 17, 2005) [http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story\\_id=5169458](http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=5169458) accessed 18 November 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Barnett

<sup>10</sup> Barnett

<sup>11</sup> Richard B. Meyers, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D. C.: The Pentagon, March 2004, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Barnett

<sup>13</sup> “Sizing up the Dragon”, *The Economist* (July 21, 2005) [http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=4198701](http://www.economist.com/displaystory.cfm?story_id=4198701) accessed 19 November 2005.

<sup>14</sup> ibid

<sup>15</sup> Martin Andrew, “Modernizing PLA Logistics”, *The Jamestown Foundation China Brief* (vol. V, Issue 25, December 6, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> George W. Bush, *The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, Washington, D. C.: The White House, February 2003, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas P. M. Barnett, *The Pentagon’s New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century* (New York, New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 2004) p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> Mike Mullen, Admiral, USN, “What I Believe: Eight Tenets That Guide My Vision For the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Navy” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* (January 2006), p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> John Trost Kuehn, USN, “Maritime and Expeditionary Dominance: Great Britain’s Legacy to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Strategy,” *Military Review* (September-October 2003), p. 52.

<sup>21</sup> Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (ed.), p. 34

<sup>22</sup> Alfred T. Mahan, *Mahan on Naval Strategy* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1991), p. 37

<sup>23</sup> Mahan, p. 46

<sup>24</sup> Admiral Vern Clark, remarks as delivered “SEA POWER 21: Operational Concepts for a New Era” Current Strategy Forum, Naval War College, Newport, RI, June 12, 2002, available

from [http://www.news.navy.mil/search/displaybbs.asp?bbs\\_id=353&cat=2](http://www.news.navy.mil/search/displaybbs.asp?bbs_id=353&cat=2) accessed 23 September 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Clark

<sup>26</sup> Kuehn, p. 55

<sup>27</sup> Samuel B. Griffith, *Sun Tzu The Art of War*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 77

<sup>28</sup> email from RADM Michael Lefever, Commander ESG-1, dtd 19 Nov 05.

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph DiRenzo III, Chris Doane, Jennifer Zeldis, John X. Carrier, and Frank Hoffman, "Katrina: What's Going Right", *Proceedings* (October 2005), p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> Donald H. Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C.: The Pentagon, March 2005, p. 4.